

THE SWINDOLL STUDY BIBLE

TRUSTED WISDOM
PRACTICAL APPLICATION
REFRESHING INSIGHT

THE
SWINDOLL
STUDY BIBLE
L A R G E P R I N T

CHARLES R. SWINDOLL

Charles Swindoll



New Living
Translation®

Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS

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Dear Reader,

There is nothing quite like the Bible. This Book is unique because it is *God's very Word*.

When God wanted to communicate with us, He didn't simply speak His message. Nor did He merely reveal it in the clouds or communicate it through dreams and visions. No, He did much more. The Lord saw to it that His Word was actually written down by His prophets and apostles and then preserved and translated through the ages by His faithful followers. The Spirit of God has communicated the Word of God in clear, understandable terms so that people of all generations can read it, understand it, and be transformed by it.

Because God felt it was so important to give us the Bible, we should take the time to read it, study it, and even commit portions of it to memory. Ultimately, we should allow its transforming truths to change us. Make no mistake: The Bible—God's Word—is our final authority for faith and practice. It is living, infallible truth from our living, infallible God. Knowing and loving Him requires knowing and loving His Word.

The Bible you hold in your hands will help you do just that.

The notes you'll find throughout this Bible come from literally thousands of hours of my personal study over more than fifty years of ministry. This study Bible was designed with you in mind. As you read the Scriptures, imagine my sitting beside you and sharing personal stories, important insights, and hard-earned lessons that will encourage you to walk more closely with Jesus Christ. You'll discover the *who, what, where, when, why, and how* of the Bible. *Who* wrote it and *when?* *What* does it mean, and *where* did its events occur? *Why* should I trust it? And most importantly, *how* can I apply it today?

It's that last question more than any other that has fed my passion to publish this Bible. My primary focus in ministry has been teaching biblical *insight for living* . . . for genuine life change. After all, that's why God has communicated His Word to us—so that we may become like His Son, Jesus Christ, the central figure of this Book.



CHARLES R. SWINDOLL
SENIOR PASTOR
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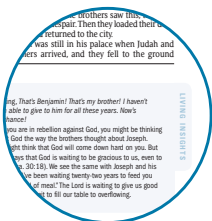


HOLY LAND TOUR will take you on a journey through the lands of the Bible. This tour visits many major archeological and geographical sites that relate to the Bible in some way, and each tour stop explains why a site is important in the Scriptures and includes a photo of the site or an artifact related to that place. It is almost like being on a bus tour of the Holy Land with Chuck and his team! You will find six unique guided tours that will walk you through several tour stops arranged around a theme. Check out the Holy Land Tour Itineraries beginning on page 1955.

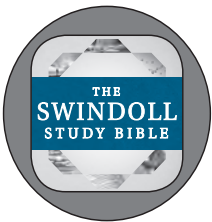
Note on the maps in the Holy Land Tour: The borders of Israel have expanded and contracted over the centuries and continue to be a point of contention even today. The tour maps in this Bible represent the modern State of Israel, and the dotted lines denote the cease-fire line—which once enclosed what was called the West Bank—that came as a result of the armistice following the 1948 War of Independence. There is an expectation that final borders still need to be negotiated. Amazingly, in the future Kingdom of God, the borders of Israel will reach “all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River” (Gen. 15:18).



PRAYER MOMENTS are brief prayers adapted from the ones Chuck delivers at the end of each of his sermons. These prayers apply the message of the Scriptures, asking God for help in living out the truth He is teaching His people.



LIVING INSIGHTS are found on almost every page of this Bible. Drawn from Chuck’s sermons during his ministry of fifty-plus years, these brief notes highlight important teachings from the Scriptures. It is like having Chuck sit right alongside you as you read Scripture, pointing out the things he’d like to pass along to you.



APP
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A Note to Readers

The *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, was first published in 1996. It quickly became one of the most popular Bible translations in the English-speaking world. While the NLT's influence was rapidly growing, the Bible Translation Committee determined that an additional investment in scholarly review and text refinement could make it even better. So shortly after its initial publication, the committee began an eight-year process with the purpose of increasing the level of the NLT's precision without sacrificing its easy-to-understand quality. This second-generation text was completed in 2004, with minor changes subsequently introduced in 2007, 2013, and 2015.

The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning and content of the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts as accurately as possible to contemporary readers. The challenge for our translators was to create a text that would communicate as clearly and powerfully to today's readers as the original texts did to readers and listeners in the ancient biblical world. The resulting translation is easy to read and understand, while also accurately communicating the meaning and content of the original biblical texts. The NLT is a general-purpose text especially good for study, devotional reading, and reading aloud in worship services.

We believe that the New Living Translation—which combines the latest biblical scholarship with a clear, dynamic writing style—will communicate God's word powerfully to all who read it. We publish it with the prayer that God will use it to speak his timeless truth to the church and the world in a fresh, new way.

The Publishers

Introduction to the New Living Translation

Translation Philosophy and Methodology

English Bible translations tend to be governed by one of two general translation theories. The first theory has been called “formal-equivalence,” “literal,” or “word-for-word” translation. According to this theory, the translator attempts to render each word of the original language into English and seeks to preserve the original syntax and sentence structure as much as possible in translation. The second theory has been called “dynamic-equivalence,” “functional-equivalence,” or “thought-for-thought” translation. The goal of this translation theory is to produce in English the closest natural equivalent of the message expressed by the original-language text, both in meaning and in style.

Both of these translation theories have their strengths. A formal-equivalence translation preserves aspects of the original text—including ancient idioms, term consistency, and original-language syntax—that are valuable for scholars and professional study. It allows a reader to trace formal elements of the original-language text through the English translation. A dynamic-equivalence translation, on the other hand, focuses on translating the message of the original-language text. It ensures that the meaning of the text is readily apparent to the contemporary reader. This allows the message to come through with immediacy, without requiring the reader to struggle with foreign idioms and awkward syntax.

The pure application of either of these translation philosophies would create translations at opposite ends of the translation spectrum. But in reality, all translations contain a mixture of these two philosophies. A purely formal-equivalence translation would be unintelligible in English, and a purely dynamic-equivalence translation would risk being unfaithful to the original. That is why translations shaped by dynamic-equivalence

theory are usually quite literal when the original text is relatively clear, and the translations shaped by formal-equivalence theory are sometimes quite dynamic when the original text is obscure.

The translators of the New Living Translation set out to render the message of the original texts of Scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so, they kept the concerns of both formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear, and natural English text. Many words and phrases were rendered literally and consistently into English, preserving essential literary and rhetorical devices, ancient metaphors, and word choices that give structure to the text and provide echoes of meaning from one passage to the next.

On the other hand, the translators rendered the message more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, was misleading, or yielded archaic or foreign wording. They clarified difficult metaphors and terms to aid in the reader’s understanding. The translators first struggled with the meaning of the words and phrases in the ancient context; then they rendered the message into clear, natural English. Their goal was to be both faithful to the ancient texts and eminently readable.

Translation Process and Team

To produce an accurate translation of the Bible into contemporary English, the translation team needed the skills necessary to enter into the thought patterns of the ancient authors and then to render their ideas, connotations, and effects into clear, contemporary English. To begin this process, qualified

biblical scholars were needed to interpret the meaning of the original text and to check it against our base English translation. In order to guard against personal and theological biases, the scholars needed to represent a diverse group of evangelicals who would employ the best exegetical tools. Then to work alongside the scholars, skilled English stylists were needed to shape the text into clear, contemporary English.

With these concerns in mind, the Bible Translation Committee recruited teams of scholars that represented a broad spectrum of denominations, theological perspectives, and backgrounds within the worldwide evangelical community. Each book of the Bible was assigned to three different scholars with proven expertise in the book or group of books to be reviewed. Each of these scholars made a thorough review of a base translation and submitted suggested revisions to the appropriate Senior Translator. The Senior Translator then reviewed and summarized these suggestions and proposed a first-draft revision of the base text. This draft served as the basis for several additional phases of exegetical and stylistic committee review. Then the Bible Translation Committee jointly reviewed and approved every verse of the final translation.

Throughout the translation and editing process, the Senior Translators and their scholar teams were given a chance to review the editing done by the team of stylists. This ensured that exegetical errors would not be introduced late in the process and that the entire Bible Translation Committee was happy with the final result. By choosing a team of qualified scholars and skilled stylists and by setting up a process that allowed their interaction throughout the process, the New Living Translation has been refined to preserve the essential formal elements of the original biblical texts, while also creating a clear, understandable English text.

The New Living Translation was first published in 1996. Shortly after its initial publication, the Bible Translation Committee began a process of further committee review and translation refinement. The purpose of this continued revision was to increase the level of precision without sacrificing the text's

easy-to-understand quality. This second-edition text was completed in 2004, with minor changes subsequently introduced in 2007, 2013, and 2015.

Written to Be Read Aloud

It is evident in Scripture that the biblical documents were written to be read aloud, often in public worship (see Nehemiah 8; Luke 4:16-20; 1 Timothy 4:13; Revelation 1:3). It is still the case today that more people will hear the Bible read aloud in church than are likely to read it for themselves. Therefore, a new translation must communicate with clarity and power when it is read publicly. Clarity was a primary goal for the NLT translators, not only to facilitate private reading and understanding, but also to ensure that it would be excellent for public reading and make an immediate and powerful impact on any listener.

The Texts behind the New Living Translation

The Old Testament translators used the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible as represented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), with its extensive system of textual notes. The translators also further compared the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint and other Greek manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and any other versions or manuscripts that shed light on the meaning of difficult passages.

The New Testament translators used the two standard editions of the Greek New Testament: the *Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies (UBS, fourth revised edition, 1993), and *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (NA, twenty-seventh edition, 1993). These two editions, which have the same text but differ in punctuation and textual notes, represent, for the most part, the best in modern textual scholarship. However, in cases where strong textual or other scholarly evidence supported the decision, the translators sometimes chose to differ from the UBS

and NA Greek texts and followed variant readings found in other ancient witnesses. Significant textual variants of this sort are always noted in the textual notes of the New Living Translation.

Translation Issues

The translators have made a conscious effort to provide a text that can be easily understood by the typical reader of modern English. To this end, we sought to use only vocabulary and language structures in common use today. We avoided using language likely to become quickly dated or that reflects only a narrow subdialect of English, with the goal of making the New Living Translation as broadly useful and timeless as possible.

But our concern for readability goes beyond the concerns of vocabulary and sentence structure. We are also concerned about historical and cultural barriers to understanding the Bible, and we have sought to translate terms shrouded in history and culture in ways that can be immediately understood. To this end:

- ▶ We have converted ancient weights and measures (for example, “ephah” [a unit of dry volume] or “cubit” [a unit of length]) to modern English (American) equivalents, since the ancient measures are not generally meaningful to today’s readers. Then in the textual footnotes we offer the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek measures, along with modern metric equivalents.
- ▶ Instead of translating ancient currency values literally, we have expressed them in common terms that communicate the message. For example, in the Old Testament, “ten shekels of silver” becomes “ten pieces of silver” to convey the intended message.
- ▶ Since the names of Hebrew months are unknown to most contemporary readers, and since the Hebrew lunar calendar fluctuates from year to year in relation to the solar calendar used today, we have looked for clear ways to communicate the time of year the Hebrew months (such as Abib) refer to.

Where it is possible to define a specific ancient date in terms of our modern calendar, we use modern dates in the text. A textual footnote then gives the literal Hebrew date and states the rationale for our rendering.

- ▶ Since ancient references to the time of day differ from our modern methods of denoting time, we have used renderings that are instantly understandable to the modern reader. Accordingly, we have rendered specific times of day by using approximate equivalents in terms of our common “o’clock” system.
- ▶ When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the message of the text, its meaning is often illuminated with a textual footnote. For example, in Exodus 2:10 the text reads: “The princess named him Moses, for she explained, ‘I lifted him out of the water.’”

Sometimes, when the actual meaning of a name is clear, that meaning is included in parentheses within the text itself. For example, the text at Genesis 16:11 reads: “You are to name him Ishmael (*which means ‘God hears’*), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress.” Since the original hearers and readers would have instantly understood the meaning of the name “Ishmael,” we have provided modern readers with the same information so they can experience the text in a similar way.

- ▶ Many words and phrases carry a great deal of cultural meaning that was obvious to the original readers but needs explanation in our own culture. For example, the phrase “they beat their breasts” (Luke 23:48) in ancient times meant that people were very upset, often in mourning. In our translation we chose to translate this phrase dynamically for clarity: “They went home *in deep sorrow*.”
- ▶ Metaphorical language is sometimes difficult for contemporary readers to understand, so at times we have chosen to translate or illuminate the meaning of a metaphor. For example,

the ancient poet writes, “Your neck is *like* the tower of David” (Song of Songs 4:4). We have rendered it “Your neck is *as beautiful as* the tower of David” to clarify the intended positive meaning of the simile.

- ▶ When the content of the original language text is poetic in character, we have rendered it in English poetic form. Hebrew poetry often uses parallelism, a literary form where a second phrase (or in some instances a third or fourth) echoes the initial phrase in some way. Whenever possible, we sought to represent these parallel phrases in natural poetic English.
- ▶ The Greek term *hoi Ioudaioi* is literally translated “the Jews” in many English translations. In the Gospel of John, however, this term doesn’t always refer to the Jewish people generally. In some contexts, it refers more particularly to the Jewish religious leaders. We have attempted to capture the meaning in these different contexts by using terms such as “the people” (with a footnote: Greek *the Jewish people*) or “the Jewish leaders,” where appropriate.
- ▶ One challenge we faced was how to translate accurately the ancient biblical text that was originally written in a context where male-oriented terms were used to refer to humanity generally. We needed to respect the nature of the ancient context while also trying to make the translation clear to a modern audience that tends to read male-oriented language as applying only to males. Often the original text, though using masculine nouns and pronouns, clearly intends that the message be applied to both men and women. A typical example is found in the New Testament letters, where the believers are called “brothers” (*adelphoi*). Yet it is clear from the content of these letters that they were addressed to all the believers—male and female. Thus, we have usually translated this Greek word as “brothers and sisters” in order to represent the historical situation more accurately.

We have also been sensitive to passages where the text applies generally to human beings or to the human condition. In some instances we have used plural pronouns (they, them) in place of the masculine singular (he, him). For example, a traditional rendering of Proverbs 22:6 is: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” We have rendered it: “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.” At times, we have also replaced third person pronouns with the second person to ensure clarity. A traditional rendering of Proverbs 26:27 is: “He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.” We have rendered it: “If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will crush you instead.”

We should emphasize that all masculine nouns and pronouns used to represent God (for example, “Father”) have been maintained without exception. All decisions of this kind have been driven by the concern to reflect accurately the intended meaning of the original texts of Scripture.

Lexical Consistency in Terminology

For the sake of clarity, we have translated certain original-language terms consistently, especially within synoptic passages and for commonly repeated rhetorical phrases, and within certain word categories such as divine names and non-theological technical terminology (e.g., liturgical, legal, cultural, zoological, and botanical terms). For theological terms, we have allowed a greater semantic range of acceptable English words or phrases for a single Hebrew or Greek word. We have avoided some theological terms that are not readily understood by many modern readers. For example, we avoided using words such as “justification” and “sanctification,” which are carryovers from Latin translations. In place of these words, we have provided renderings such as “made right with God” and “made holy.”

The Spelling of Proper Names

Many individuals in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, are known by more than one name (e.g., Uzziah/Azariah). For the sake of clarity, we have tried to use a single spelling for any one individual, footnoting the literal spelling whenever we differ from it. This is especially helpful in delineating the kings of Israel and Judah. King Joash/Jehoash of Israel has been consistently called Jehoash, while King Joash/Jehoash of Judah is called Joash. A similar distinction has been used to distinguish between Joram/Jehoram of Israel and Joram/Jehoram of Judah. All such decisions were made with the goal of clarifying the text for the reader. When the ancient biblical writers clearly had a theological purpose in their choice of a variant name (e.g., Esh-baal/Ishbosheth), the different names have been maintained with an explanatory footnote.

For the names Jacob and Israel, which are used interchangeably for both the individual patriarch and the nation, we generally render it “Israel” when it refers to the nation and “Jacob” when it refers to the individual. When our rendering of the name differs from the underlying Hebrew text, we provide a textual footnote, which includes this explanation: “The names ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.”

The Rendering of Divine Names

In the Old Testament, all appearances of *'el*, *'elohim*, or *'eloah* have been translated “God,” except where the context demands the translation “god(s).” We have generally rendered the tetragrammaton (*YHWH*) consistently as “the LORD,” utilizing a form with small capitals that is common among English translations. This will distinguish it from the name *'adonai*, which we render “Lord.” When *'adonai* and *YHWH* appear together, we have rendered it “Sovereign LORD.” This also distinguishes *'adonai YHWH* from cases where *YHWH* appears with *'elohim*, which is rendered “LORD God.” When *YH* (the short form of *YHWH*) and *YHWH* appear together, we have rendered it “LORD GOD.” When

YHWH appears with the term *tseba'oth*, we have rendered it “LORD of Heaven’s Armies” to translate the meaning of the name. In a few cases, we have utilized the transliteration, *Yahweh*, when the personal character of the name is being invoked in contrast to another divine name or the name of some other god (for example, see Exodus 3:15; 6:2-3).

In the Gospels and Acts, the Greek word *christos* has normally been translated as “Messiah” when the context assumes a Jewish audience. When a Gentile audience can be assumed (which is consistently the case in the Epistles and Revelation), *christos* has been translated as “Christ.” The Greek word *kurios* is consistently translated “Lord,” except that it is translated “LORD” wherever the New Testament text explicitly quotes from the Old Testament, and the text there has it in small capitals.

Textual Footnotes

The New Living Translation provides several kinds of textual footnotes, all designated in the text with an asterisk:

- ▶ When for the sake of clarity the NLT renders a difficult or potentially confusing phrase dynamically, we generally give the literal rendering in a textual footnote. This allows the reader to see the literal source of our dynamic rendering and how our translation relates to other more literal translations. These notes are prefaced with “Hebrew,” “Aramaic,” or “Greek,” identifying the language of the underlying source text. For example, in Acts 2:42 we translated the literal “breaking of bread” (from the Greek) as “the Lord’s Supper” to clarify that this verse refers to the ceremonial practice of the church rather than just an ordinary meal. Then we attached a footnote to “the Lord’s Supper,” which reads: “Greek *the breaking of bread*.”
- ▶ Textual footnotes are also used to show alternative renderings, prefaced with the word “Or.” These normally occur for passages where an aspect of the meaning is debated. On occasion,

we also provide notes on words or phrases that represent a departure from long-standing tradition. These notes are prefaced with “Traditionally rendered.” For example, the footnote to the translation “serious skin disease” at Leviticus 13:2 says: “Traditionally rendered *leprosy*. The Hebrew word used throughout this passage is used to describe various skin diseases.”

- ▶ When our translators follow a textual variant that differs significantly from our standard Hebrew or Greek texts (listed earlier), we document that difference with a footnote. We also footnote cases when the NLT excludes a passage that is included in the Greek text known as the *Textus Receptus* (and familiar to readers through its translation in the King James Version). In such cases, we offer a translation of the excluded text in a footnote, even though it is generally recognized as a later addition to the Greek text and not part of the original Greek New Testament.
- ▶ All Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament are identified by a textual footnote at the New Testament location. When the New Testament clearly quotes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and when it differs significantly in wording from the Hebrew text, we also place a textual footnote at the Old Testament location. This note includes a rendering of the Greek version, along with a cross-reference to the New Testament passage(s) where it is cited (for example, see notes on Psalms 8:2; 53:3; Proverbs 3:12).
- ▶ Some textual footnotes provide cultural and historical information on places, things, and people in the Bible that are probably obscure to modern readers. Such notes should aid the reader in

understanding the message of the text. For example, in Acts 12:1, “King Herod” is named in this translation as “King Herod Agrippa” and is identified in a footnote as being “the nephew of Herod Antipas and a grandson of Herod the Great.”

- ▶ When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the meaning of the text, it is either illuminated with a textual footnote or included within parentheses in the text itself. For example, the footnote concerning the name “Eve” at Genesis 3:20 reads: “*Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to give life.’ ” This wordplay in the Hebrew illuminates the meaning of the text, which goes on to say that Eve “would be the mother of all who live.”

AS WE SUBMIT this translation for publication, we recognize that any translation of the Scriptures is subject to limitations and imperfections. Anyone who has attempted to communicate the richness of God’s word into another language will realize it is impossible to make a perfect translation. Recognizing these limitations, we sought God’s guidance and wisdom throughout this project. Now we pray that he will accept our efforts and use this translation for the benefit of the church and of all people.

We pray that the New Living Translation will overcome some of the barriers of history, culture, and language that have kept people from reading and understanding God’s word. We hope that readers unfamiliar with the Bible will find the words clear and easy to understand and that readers well versed in the Scriptures will gain a fresh perspective. We pray that readers will gain insight and wisdom for living, but most of all that they will meet the God of the Bible and be forever changed by knowing him.

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Holy Bible, New Living Translation

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OLD TESTAMENT

THE PENTATEUCH

Pentateuch is from a Greek word that means “five books.” It is a common name for the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books were each written by Moses and chronicle God’s creation of the world, God’s choice to draw humanity to Himself through the family of Abraham, the growth of that family into a large nation, Moses’ delivery of God’s law to the people, and God’s leadership of the Israelites out of slavery, through the wilderness, and to the edge of their Promised Land.

GENESIS

*Before the mountains were born,
before you gave birth to the earth and the world,
from beginning to end, you are God.*

PSALM 90:2

Who Wrote the Book?

Old Testament books seldom include a byline, so we occasionally look to outside sources to discover their authorship. Jewish tradition and other biblical authors name Moses, the prophet and deliverer of Israel, as the author of the entire Pentateuch—the first five books of the Old Testament. His education in the courts of Egypt (Acts 7:22) and his close communion with Yahweh—the Hebrew name for God—support this premise. Jesus Himself confirmed Moses' authorship (see John 5:45-47), as did the scribes and Pharisees of His time (Matt. 19:7; 22:24).

The first book of the Bible gets its name from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures. *Genesis* is a Greek word that means “beginning” or “origin” and serves as a translation of the first word in the original Hebrew version of Genesis: *bereshith*.

Moses wrote Genesis for the people of Israel, whom he led out of slavery in Egypt back to the land of their forefathers. Genesis provides a history of those forefathers—their origins, their journeys, and their covenants with God. Because the events contained in the rest of the Pentateuch are responses to the promises of God found in Genesis, such a history of God's interaction with their ancestors would have provided encouragement and inspiration to the former slaves seeking freedom and prosperity in the Promised Land.

Where Are We?

The first eleven chapters of Genesis paint the early history of the human race in broad strokes. After the great flood, the focus narrows to God's dealings with one family living in Mesopotamia, a family headed by Abram (later called Abraham). From the Euphrates River (in modern-day Iraq) over to what is now Syria, events move south into Canaan (modern-day Jordan and Israel) and Egypt. See the map on the following page for a helpful visual reference to important places in Genesis.

Genesis covers a longer period of time than all the other books in the Bible combined. While the ancient history recounted in the first eleven chapters gives no indication of time span, Abram's story begins (Gen. 12:1) around 2091 BC, and the book ends with Joseph's death in Egypt (Gen. 50:26) around 1805 BC.



Why Is Genesis So Important?

To the original readers of Genesis, the book was valued as a history of their people. It told them the story of how God created the world and dealt with all humanity until He initiated a personal relationship with their forefather Abraham. Genesis revealed to them the eternal promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—promises that extended to their descendants. It provided comfort and hope for the downtrodden Israelites as they waited to return to their Promised Land.

*Genesis offers
a thorough
background
to the rest of
the Bible.*

For later readers, Genesis offers a thorough background to the rest of the Bible. Here we learn ancient history and geography and are introduced to significant people and events found later in the Bible. In Genesis God reveals many facets of His nature through His dealings with people. We also learn of the origin of sin, of its destructive effect on humanity, and of God's plan to atone for that sin through a future Son from the people of Israel (Gen. 3:15; 22:18; 49:10).

What's the Big Idea?

The Bible is divided into two major parts, the Old and New Testaments. *Testament* is another word for *covenant*. Covenants figure prominently in the story of Genesis, for they help define God's relationship with His people at various times. Sin broke the perfect peace between God and humanity (see Gen. 3). But God established His plan for redemption through covenants. He made a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), then reaffirmed it with Isaac (Gen. 26:2-5) and with Jacob (Gen. 28:13-15). God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob applied to the Israelites in Egypt and to later generations. Genesis sets the stage for the rest of God's plan to redeem the world through His Son, Jesus Christ.

How Do I Apply This?

It's easy to get lost in the genealogies and stories in Genesis without seeing the big picture. Keep God, not the people, in mind as you read through the book. Consider His character qualities. If you were an Israelite just released from slavery and reading this for the first time, would you marvel at God's power over creation? Or His anger over sin? Or the way He fulfilled His promises to everyone? Awareness of each of these characteristics should evoke worship—and hope. Remember that the Lord is strong, faithful, and just. And His desire to bless His creation will one day be fully realized.

	Creation	Fall	Flood	Nations	Abraham	Isaac	Jacob	Joseph
	Genesis 1–2	Genesis 3–5	Genesis 6–9	Genesis 10–11	Genesis 12–25	Genesis 26–27	Genesis 28–36	Genesis 37–50
Beginnings	Beginning of the human race				Beginning of the chosen race			
Result	Confusion and scattering				Bondage in Egypt			
History	Primeval history				Patriarchal history			
Emphasis	Four major events				Four important people			
Time	Over 2,000 years				Approximately 300 years			
Key Words and Phrases	“In the beginning” (Gen. 1:1); “account” (Gen. 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1; 37:2)							
Theme	God promises to redeem and bless His people.							
Key Verses	Genesis 3:15; 12:3							
Christ in Genesis	Pictured in the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15); Melchizedek, the high priest (Gen. 14:18); the humiliation and exaltation of Joseph (Gen. 37–41)							

The Account of Creation

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* ²The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

³Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

⁶Then God said, “Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth.” ⁷And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. ⁸God called the space “sky.”

And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

⁹Then God said, “Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” And that is what happened. ¹⁰God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.” And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, “Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came.”

And that is what happened. ¹²The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

¹³And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

¹⁴Then God said, “Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years. ¹⁵Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth.”

1:1 Or In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . . Or When God began to create the heavens and the earth, . . .

A BOOK OF BEGINNINGS *Gen. 1:1* The book of Genesis is the book of beginnings. Whatever begins, begins here. It is the beginning of time, the beginning of matter, and the beginning of humanity. Even sin had its beginning here, and thus, so did God’s judgment. In Genesis we see, for the first time, the plan of God begin to unfold and the promise of the Messiah’s coming. Genesis is the beginning of the family as God created it—the husband-and-wife relationship—and the product of their union, the birth of children. This first book in the Book of books is the beginning of life as we know it. It all starts in Genesis.

And that is what happened. ¹⁶God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind.” ²¹So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

²³And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. ²⁵God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make human beings* in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth,* and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created human beings* in his own image.

In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁹Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. ³⁰And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

³¹Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

2 So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. ²On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested* from all his work. ³And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

⁴This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

The Man and Woman in Eden

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. ⁶Instead, springs* came up from the ground and watered all the land. ⁷Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person.

⁸Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made.

⁹The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from

1:26a Or *man*; Hebrew reads *adam*. 1:26b As in Syriac version; Hebrew reads *all the earth*. 1:27 Or *the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*. 2:2 Or *ceased*; also in 2:3. 2:6 Or *mist*.

REMEMBER YOUR GENESIS *Gen. 1:26-27* We each have our own genesis. We have all had our beginnings. I have never seen any two people with the same beginning. God has created us all unique—every individual is different. Think back to your genesis, the beginning of your walk with the Lord. Remember how old you were. Recall who first shared the gospel with you. Think back to that time when you released your right to live your own way and surrendered yourself, in faith, to Christ. That was your genesis. True life began for you in that moment.

VERY GOOD *Gen. 1:31* God looked at His creation and said, in effect, “Everything is in its place. Everything is excellent. Nothing needs to be added. Nothing is lacking that I wanted. Life, light, matter, land, sea, vegetation, man, woman—it is all there, and it is very good!”

THE BEGINNING OF LEISURE *Gen. 2:2* God wasn’t tired. He didn’t rest because there was nothing else to do. Rather, He deliberately *stopped* His work so that there could be a deliberate *beginning* of leisure. This was a time to look at what He had made and to contemplate the value of it. It was a time for enjoyment.

We sometimes make an idol out of productivity. If we do take some time out for relaxation and enjoyment, we immediately start to feel guilty. But if we’re serious about imitating God, then we must take time for leisure. We have to take time to rest, to think, and to appreciate. Whenever we do these things, we are doing exactly what God did.

The Image of God

GENESIS 1:26-27

THE CLIMAX OF THE CREATIVE WEEK is God's creation of humanity. The stars and planets are in place. The sun is ready to rule the day and the moon the night. The seas and the land have been formed. The plants and trees are bursting with life and in full bloom. Then God brings humanity onto the scene. It almost appears anticlimactic until we see that there is something altogether distinct about God's creation of the man and the woman in Genesis 1:26-27. The plants and animals were not made in His image. The stars too, as magnificent as they are, do not bear God's likeness. But the man and the woman do.

When God said, "Let us make human beings in our image," He was saying, in effect, "Humanity will be unlike anything I have created. No other being has a heart to love Me. No other created being has a mind to know Me or a will to obey Me. Nothing else in all of My creation has a destiny of eternity like these creatures will have. I will make humans distinct. They will have *imago Dei*, 'the image of God,' stamped on them. Only they will have a capacity within them to love and know and obey Me."

When we use the word *image* in our culture, our minds imagine something external and short-lived. We talk about celebrities, corporations, or brands that protect "their image." An "image" in these cases has more to do with perception than reality. But when we speak of the *image of God*, we're not talking about God's appearance as projected and presented through humanity. We're talking about portraying who God is. In a unique and amazing way, human beings relate to God and reflect something of His character and nature.

What does it mean to be made in God's image? Theologians have spilled oceans of ink on this topic, but I will offer a few simple proposals. Humans have a capacity not found in animals. God communicates with us in a way He does not communicate with animals. There are inner, secret chambers within our being where the Lord connects with us. He prods us with inner promptings. He urges, He moves, He convicts, He directs, He stops, He guards, He guides. When God made us, He gave us more than a body: He gave us an immaterial soul—a spirit. Animals do not have a spirit. They have no connection with God except by way of instinct and the natural order of things.

When God created the first humans, He made them to have a sense of community, connection, and communication with the One who fashioned them. But once sin entered the world, that connection broke down. It wasn't erased, but it was defaced. It wasn't destroyed; it was damaged. We live with a defaced and damaged image today. Nevertheless, unlike animals, we are able to connect with our God in the inner person.

Bearing the image of God means that humans have dignity. It also means that God has entrusted us with the responsibility and the capacity to love and obey Him.

The image of God is who we are as human beings. It is our most basic, original calling. God calls us to live in His image—in the light of who He is and who He has made us to be.

God created humans to have community, connection, and communication with the One who fashioned them.

the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. ¹¹The first branch, called the Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. ¹²The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. ¹³The second branch, called the Gihon, flowed around the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴The third branch, called the Tigris, flowed east of the land of Asshur. The fourth branch is called the Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. ¹⁶But the LORD God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—¹⁷except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” ¹⁹So the LORD God formed from the ground

all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man* to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. ²⁰He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man’s ribs* and closed up the opening. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

²³“At last!” the man exclaimed.

“This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!
She will be called ‘woman,’
because she was taken from ‘man.’”

²⁴This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

²⁵Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

2:19 Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter. 2:21 Or *took a part of the man’s side*.

THE PRIVILEGE OF WORK *Gen. 2:15* The first thing God did with the first man on the earth was give him a job. Work is important to God. The job Adam had was a significant responsibility, an involved occupation: The man was to cultivate the garden.

Many people feel that work is a curse. But it isn’t. When we look at Genesis 2–3, we see that sweat upon the brow is part of the curse, but work itself is not a curse. In fact, work began in the context of innocence. Work remains one of the greatest privileges God has given us.

GOD TAKES CARE OF HIS CHILDREN *Gen. 2:18* Adam did not come to God one day and say, “God, I’ve had it with being in the garden alone. I am really just sick of all these lonely days and nights.” No, it was God who saw that it was “not good for the man to be alone.” Adam simply did his work faithfully, and God stepped in.

How did God know to do that? He took time to observe. He related. He anticipated the need before Adam even said it. He knew what Adam needed even though Adam didn’t know it himself and didn’t have the ability to say it.

Parents, take time to study how your children are made. Observe how each one is unlike other children, and then move in to help when you see a need. That’s relating. That’s building a friendship. It takes time and effort if you want it to be a real friendship. God takes time and effort with us. He notices who we are and what we need. He sees a lack, and He responds. This is what the love of God is all about.

THE HELPER SINGS HARMONY *Gen. 2:18* God holds the patent on marriage. It was His idea! It wasn’t ours. He came up with it. God’s truth, as revealed in Scripture, remains unchanged. God looks at the man as he is alone, and God says, “Not good. That’s not best.” The aloneness is not good. And then He says, “I will make a helper who is just right for him.”

Here’s the way I like to describe it. The Lord gave the man the melody line in the music, and He gave the woman the harmony part. It’s a beautiful duet put together by God.

The very first term used to describe the purpose of the wife is “helper.” She’s the one who assists in the fulfillment of this relationship. She’s the one who adds color and harmony and beauty to the relationship. Otherwise, it’s rather meat-and-potatoes, a plain and primitive melody. God says to Adam, in essence, “All alone, your voice can’t carry it, Adam. You working alone is not something that pleases Me, nor will it really satisfy you. I will provide someone you need who is just right for you.”

DELIGHTFUL INTIMACY *Gen. 2:24-25* God’s design shows His intent. In God’s plan, marriage is monogamy—a heterosexual relationship between a man and a woman joined by God. This plan is so lovely and fulfilling that the last verse of Genesis 2 describes the man and his wife as both being naked without shame. There is no self-consciousness. There is no uneasiness with one another. There is no reluctance. The heavenly Father who made them said, in effect, “Man alone is not as good as man joined.” And in the beauty and intimacy of this innocent setting, there is even freedom in their nakedness. That plan hasn’t changed. In the bonds of marriage as God designed it there is a delightful intimacy found nowhere else.

Guidelines for Marriage

GENESIS 2:24-25

I FIND IN GENESIS 2:24-25 four helpful guidelines for marriage we can summarize in one word each. When trouble comes in a marriage, it's because one or more of these four guidelines have been overlooked, ignored, or directly disobeyed.

The first is the principle of *severance*: "A man leaves his father and mother." Severance does not mean we no longer listen to our parents. Nor does it mean we never need them or talk to them. Of course not! Severance simply means we are not dependent on them. We either need to sever that dependence or not get married. This applies to both men and women, regardless of age.

The second principle is *permanence*: "A man . . . is joined to his wife." Think of glue bonding two substances together. If you've ever applied a professional-grade glue, you understand what it means when the directions say, "Don't put it on until you're ready for it to stick." Why? The things you glue together will be bonded. This is the principle of *permanence*. Following this principle means working through and dealing with anything that may cause the glue to break loose—anything disturbing the permanence. That means you don't do things that threaten the bond. You refuse to spend time with people who can weaken the permanence. You don't allow flexibility where there should be faithfulness. To be joined is to be permanently bonded—for life.

The third principle is *unity*: "The two are united into one." Paul would later refer to this union as a "great mystery" (Eph. 5:32). Can you imagine two people who are very different becoming one? It doesn't happen automatically or easily. The process only *begins* at the altar. It takes a long time and a lot of hard work for two people to become united in body, mind, and purpose. It requires a lifetime of adaptation and adjustment for two to become one.

The fourth and final principle is *intimacy*: "The man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame." Here stood Adam and Eve, arm in arm before the living God, not ashamed to stand naked before Him or each other. Their nakedness was more than physical; it was also emotional. They had no secrets. They had nothing to hide, from God or each other. It was not until sin entered the world that they experienced shame in nakedness (Gen. 3:7). If you are married, you and your spouse are either becoming more unified or you're hiding. God wants the two of you to develop intimacy by being open with each other. When you experience heartaches, discouragements, and even joys, a spouse can understand these things like no one else. It's remarkable what happens when intimacy grows.

Perhaps you realize you have not been following God's principles for marriage. Change works against our fallen nature, and it is tough work. But the good news? With God, you can do it. The way to make a change is to start today, follow God's Word, and determine to do the right thing each day. Believe me, it's worth it.

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THE GARDEN OF EDEN

GENESIS 2



Unspoiled Creation. The Garden of Eden was an unsullied paradise, the perfect place for Adam and Eve.

TRYING TO DETERMINE the location of the Garden of Eden has given Bible students and scholars an unending quest. Genesis describes Eden as “in the east” and as having a river that watered the garden and divided, becoming four rivers. We can locate two of the four rivers—the Tigris and the Euphrates, which flowed through ancient Mesopotamia, or modern Iraq (Gen. 2:8, 10-14). With these scant geographical facts, scholars must put a question mark in the atlas beside any proposed location of the Garden of Eden.

The Hebrew term *eden* means “delight” and describes the ideal circumstances Adam and Eve enjoyed in the garden. Yet even a perfect environment had its challenges:

- ▶ There was a tree in the garden with fruit that God had commanded Adam and Eve not to eat (Gen. 2:16-17).
- ▶ Even in paradise, perfect humanity still faced temptation from the devil to disobey God’s command (Gen. 3:1-5; Rev. 12:9).
- ▶ Adam and Eve had within them the possibility of disobedience.

In other words, the delightful surroundings of the Garden of Eden didn’t remove the need to obey God.

It’s essential that we remember this as we pursue our goals in life. If paradise required obedience to God, how much more do our lives! To help us in our journey, we have what Adam and Eve also had—God’s direction. In spite of what the tempter would have us believe, God’s rules have good reasons. God gives us His prohibitions because He loves us—not because He is trying to keep us from our potential. In fact, it’s just the opposite. God’s purposes for our lives are best realized when we trust and obey His Word.

Searching for the Garden of Eden hasn’t ended with its physical location. Many people live their lives on a quest for the ideal life. But instead we should determine to remain obedient in whatever situation we find ourselves. Obedience is always God’s desire for us.